



Multi-use Trail Pilot Project

Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR) proposes a pilot project to institute a 15-mph speed limit, allow Class 1 and Class 2 electric-assisted bicycles, and begin an education and outreach campaign on trail use and etiquette. The pilot project will take place on five of the multi-use trails we manage: Burke-Gilman Trail, Elliott Bay Trail, Mountains to Sound Trail, Melrose Connector Trail, and Duwamish Trail. The multi-use trail pilot project will take place starting summer 2018 and last for one year.

Background

Seattle has changed significantly since 1995, when Seattle Parks and Recreation passed a Bicycle Use policy (060-P 7.11.1) that banned all motorized vehicles on multiuse trails. The population has risen dramatically over the last 28 years (150,000 more people), bicycle use has increased on streets and trails (tripled between 1992 and 2011), electric-assisted bikes are more common (up 450% since 2014), and there is now access to a number of bike share programs including e-bikes.

Earlier this year, Washington State passed a bill to define and regulate electric bicycles ([SB 6434](#)). It establishes three classifications for electric-assisted bicycles: Class 1 e-bikes are activated when pedaled, Class 2 have an independent throttle, and both have motors that are 750 watts or less and stop assisting at 20 mph. Class 3 e-bikes are pedal assist like Class 2 bikes, but can assist up to 28 mph. The law allows for Class 1 and 2 electric-assisted bicycles on shared use paths, although local laws can supersede this rule.

Currently Seattle's multi-use trails cross multiple jurisdictions with inconsistent regulations. Seattle Parks and Recreation shares management of these trails with the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT), University of Washington (UW), King County (KC), the Port of Seattle, and Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT). King County has a "reasonable and prudent" speed limit, whereby speeds in excess of 15 mph "constitute in evidence a prima facie presumption of violating" the regulation, while Seattle has no speed limit and the Port has a 5-miles per hour speed limit in some areas. Users are uncertain of the rules of the trail and often comment with questions and concerns.

To create consistency with the state legislation and across the relevant jurisdictions, SPR brought key staff together to share regulations, plans, and concerns. The SPR Multi-use Trail Pilot Project aligns with the intent and desire of managers from the other agencies and organizations, elected officials, addresses comments heard in our last briefing with the Park Board, and is consistent with state law.

Evaluation Process

During the pilot year, Seattle Parks and Recreation will collect data in the following ways: bike counters, field observations and on-site surveys, stakeholder focus groups, and public feedback through an online survey, emails and correspondence. This information will help us understand use patterns, safety concerns, and pilot outcomes. Following the collection of this data, Seattle Parks and Recreation will evaluate potential options and provide a policy recommendation to the Board of Park Commissioners.

Additional Information

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